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Farmers' Market opens By Malena DeJarnette

The Hancock County Farmers' Market has only been in place for four years, but it has grown tremendously every year since its inception. And this year is no exception. The market opens this Saturday, May 17th at 8 a.m., with more producers than ever before.

"We had three times more [producers] show up at the spring meeting," said Hancock County Tourism Director Pam Bolen.

The market began in 2004 and consisted of two open air markets - one at the courthouse and another at Lewisport's Bright Star Nursery. When the agri-tourism market grew and drew more interest, a permanent, central facility for Hancock County became not only a want, but a need.

Last year a shelter was built at Vastwood Park's U.S. 60 entrance particularly for the market's use. This presented a county-wide exhibit and one location, bringing a larger variety of produce and a larger crowd - not to mention a "rain or shine" attitude.

Many people are now becoming more conscious about where their food comes from, said Bolen. Processed foods with chemicals and additives are now being turned away from and the focus is now on fresh and organic.

With the recent switch from tobacco production to alternative crops, Hancock County farmers have been growing a plethora of everyday and exotic veggies and fruits. From asparagus to strawberries, chances are if it can be grown, it will eventually find its way to the booths at the Hancock County Farmers' Market.

This Saturday the market expects the following produce to be available for purchase: asparagus, kale, onions, lettuce, spinach, radishes. Baked goods and bedding plants will also be up for grabs.

Bolen expects, like past years, that the fresh produce will sell out within the first hour.

So in regards to the market's season just opening, spots for yard sales will also be available at no cost.

"People can come out and raise money for Relay for Life or whatever," said Bolen.

But big farmers are not the only one's benefiting, anyone with a small backyard garden or any form of operation may participate.

"We encourage people to come out and show off their talents and products," said Bolen, who noted arts and crafts are also welcome.

If you are interested in selling at the Farmers' Market attend the meeting on Saturday at 9:30 a.m. at the market facility. The cost is only \$20 to set up for the entire season. All proceeds pay for advertising. For more information contact Pam Bolen at 270-314-5688.

Bolen emphasized this is a "regional" market. Everyone is invited.

Hancock County Farmers' Market Guidelines and Rules 2008

1. The market will be located at Hancock County Agriculture Marketing Facility located at U.S. Hwy. 60
2. The market will be open at 8:00 a.m. and close at 12:00 on Saturday's, or until sell-out and on Tuesday's at 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. or until sell-out.
3. The market manager will assign selling spaces. Pam Bolen, Tim Cecil will be site managers.
4. All produce must be grown by the seller or seller's family or with special permission by the Farmers' Market committee.
5. All sellers must pay an annual fee of \$20.00 to sell at the market, no later than the first day of sale.
6. All sellers must be courteous to other sellers and customers, and this includes no alcohol and profanity.
7. The market manager and/or committee will consider exceptions to guidelines and rules on a case by case basis that is consistent with the objectives of the market.
8. Honey or sorghum offered for sale must be labeled to meet the Food Control branch requirements (Health Dept.).
9. Sales should be made by the bunch, ear, head count or volume or pound. Hanging or platform scales may be used if they meet the requirements in handbook 44, National Bureau of Standards. Any producer who is willing to have his own scales must be certified for business. The market will not be responsible for fines for not complying with laws on scales usage. Any question concerning scales please call Lanny Arnold at the Dept. of Ag. at 502-573-0282 to schedule inspection of scales for market usage.
10. Processed foods such as candy or baked items or canned foods may be sold when made in "Permitted Kitchens" approved by Mark Reed at 502-564-7181. This permit must be displayed prominently in booth.
11. No live animals may be on site, except fish.
12. Each seller must display their name in their respective booth visible to buyers.
13. Each seller shall provide sacks or containers for their produce.
14. Produce offered for sale must meet the required number of days since last spraying of insecticides or chemicals.
15. The seller will determine pricing. Each commodity must be clearly priced and readable from a distance of six feet. It is best if sellers sell like prices.
16. Each vendor is allowed only one truck per set-up because of traffic limitations. A one ton truck is the largest truck allowed.
17. Any member violating any rule or guideline of the market shall be given a written notice of the offense. A second offense shall be grounds for a three-week suspension and third offense shall result in a loss of membership at the market manager and/or committee's discretion.
18. This document must be signed and all fees paid before vendor will be permitted to participate at the market.
19. All products must be handmade or homegrown.
20. Sellers are asked to please turn in an end of day sales report before leaving.
21. If you sell at the market and offer samples of produce, you must have GAP training and certificate. This certificate must be displayed prominently at your booth.